SHAKER COLLECTION

Item 356

Account of a vision seen in a Shaker community in North Carolina, Sept. 15, 1806, and copy of letters, 1825, and a hymn

Raleigh (N C) Sep. 15. 1806.

Extraordinary Phenomenon.

The following account of an extraordinary Phenomenon that appeared to a number of people in the county of Rutherford state of North Carolina was made the 7th of August 1806. in presence of David Dickie Esq. of the county & state aforesaid. Jesse Anderson & the Rev'd Geo. Newton of the county of Buncombe & Miss Betsy Newton of the state of Georgia who unanimously agreed with the consent of the relators that Mr Newton should communicate it to Mr Gales editor of the Raleigh register & state Gazette.

Patsey Reaves a widow woman who lives near the Apalachian mountain declared that on the 31st day of July last about 6 o clock P.M. her daughter Elizabeth about 8 years old was in the cotton field about ten poles from the dwelling house which stands by computation six furlongs from the chimney mountain & that Elizabeth told her brother Morgan aged 11. years that there was a man on the mountain. Morgan was incredulous at first, but the little girl affirmed it & said she saw him rolling rocks or picking up sticks adding that she saw a heap of people. Morgan then went to the place where she was, & calling out said that he he saw a thousand or ten thousand things flying in the air; on which Polly, daughter of Mrs Reaves aged 14 years with a negro woman ran to the children & called Mrs Reaves to see what a sight yonder was. Mrs Reaves says she went about 8 poles towards them, & without any sensible alarm or fright she turned toward the chimney mountain & discovered a very numerous crowd of beings resembling the human species but could not discern any particular members of the human body nor distinction of sexes. - that they were of every size from the tallest man down to the least infants, - that there were more of the small than of the full-grown. - that they were all clad with brilliant white raiment, but could not describe any form of their raiment; - that they appeared to rise off the mountain, south of said rock & about as high = that a considerable part of the mountains top was visible about this shining host. that they moved in a northern direction and collected about the chimney rock. when all but a few had reached said rock, two seemed to rise together & behind them about two feet a third rose, these moved with great agility towards the crowd & had the nearest resemblance of men of any before seen. While beholding these three her eyes were attracted by three more rising nearly from the same place & moving swiftly in the same order & direction, after these several others rose & went towards the rock.

4 During this view, which all the spectators thought lasted upwards of an hour she sent for Mr Robert Seery who did not come at first, on a second message sent about 15 minutes after the first, Mr Seery came & being now before us he gives the following relation to the substance of which Mrs Reaves agrees. Mr Seery said, when he was coming he expected to see nothing extraordinary but when come, being asked if he saw those people on the mountain, he answered, no. but on looking a second time he said he saw more glittering white appearances of human kind than ever he had seen of men at any general review – that they were of all sizes from that of men to infants that they moved in throngs round a large rock not far from the chimney rock, & moved in a semicircular course between him & the rock & so passed on in a southern course between him & the mountain, to the place where Mrs Reaves says they rose, and that two of a full size went before the general crowd about 20 yards and as they respectively came to this place they disappeared vanished out of sight. leaving a solemn & pleasing impression on the mind accompanied with a diminution of bodily strength.

Whether the above be accountable on philosophical principles or whether it be a prelude to the descent of the holy city I leave to the curiously curious to judge } On the same ~~same~~ evening and at the same time several miles distant from the above place there was seen a bright rainbow apparently near the sun then in the west where there was neither appearance of clouds nor haze in the atmosphere.

G. Newton

Indian Talk – delivered at the entrance of lake Michigan May 4. 1807. by Le Magouis or the Trout, an Indian chief a coming from the first man whom God created. said to be now in the Shawnee settlements holding in his hand eight strings of old Wampum four white & four blue These said he are from the great spirit, he is wise & knows all things, and these must go round the world until they are wasted.

My children, I was asleep when I heard the great spirit speak to another spirit saying "I have closed my book of accounts with man I am going to destroy the earth. but first I will awaken from the sleep of the dead the first man that I have created, he is wise, let us hear if he has aught to say. he then awoke me & told me what he was about to do. I looked round the world & saw that my red children had greatly degenerated that they had become scattered & miserable. When I saw this I was grieved on their account & asked leave of the great Spirit to come & see if I could reclaim them. I requested of the great Spirit to grant that in case they should listen to my voice that the world might yet subsist three full lives, & my request was granted.

Now therefore my children hearken to my voice, it is that of the great Spirit. if you hearken to my counsel & follow my instructions for four years there will then be two days of darkness, during which I will travel unseen thro' the land & cause the animals such as they were formerly to come forth out of the earth.

"My children I created the English, French, Spaniard and Indians & the father of all these who is now awaked from a long sleep I first created, & he it is that now addresses you. The great spirit bade me address you in his own words which are these - "The Americans I did not create, they are not my children, but the children of the evil spirit. They grew from the scum of the great water when it was troubled by the evil spirit & the froth was driven into the woods by a strong east wind, They are numerous but I hate them they are unjust, they have taken away your lands which were not made for them. My children you must not get drunk, it is a great sin. your old men may drink a little pure spirits from Montreal, but you must not drink one drop of whisky, it is the drink of the evil spirit, it was not made by me, but by the Americans. - it is poison, it makes you sick - it burns your insides. You must eat no bread that is the food of the whites.

My children when you meet the whites you may salute them but not shake hands. If a white man is almost starved with hunger you may sell him a very little corn & a very little sugar but it must be by weight & measure

The great Spirit placed the white people on the other side of the great water to be a distinct peoply & gave them cattle & sheep & poultry, these you must not keep I have given you the deer & bear &c & created for you all the trees of the wood, but the myrtle tree I love the best because out of the sap you can make sugar this you must use carefully & not cut & hack it, for it has a feeling as well as you You may cut it a little & make sugar for your children, but if you cut it too much it will die & you shall perish from the earth.

My children, you must not call the Americans your father as you have done I am your Father & if you call me so you will do well x x x x x x x x x x

You complain that deer & bear are scarce you kill them just for the skins & leave their bodies to rot, or give the best piece to the whites, therefore I take them back to the earth. x x x x

You must plant your corn for yourselves & for your wives & children & help one another but raise no more than what will do you - you must not sell any of it to the whites it was not made for them.

My children, your women must not lie with the traders or other white men unless they are lawfully married. But I do not like even that x x x x x (here follows certain ~~[illegible]~~ regulations of women at certain periods &c)

My children your wise men or conjurers have bad medicine bags. They must throw away their medicine bags & when the medicine is in blossom they must gather it pure x x you are no more to dance the Wabana or the poiguer or pipe dance but you are to dance naked with your bodies painted & with the piagamanguin (war-club) in your hands. you must all have this weapon & never leave it behind you, & when you dance thus I shall always look on with pleasure. Your women must have the — for their diseases for I love to see you happy. Now my children listen to what I say & let it sink into your ears. It is the words of the Great Spirit. x x x I am now on the earth sent by the great spirit to instruct you, & each village must send me

or more principal chiefs to represent to you that you may be taught. The bearer of this talk will point out to you the path to my wigwam. I could not come myself to Sheboyche because the world is changed from what it was, it is broken & leans down & as it declines the Chippewas & all beyond will fall off & die. Therefore you must come & see me & be instructed in order to prevent that. Those villages who do not listen to this talk & send me two deputies will be cut off from the face of the earth. (Copied 1 m. 1.1819) Recopied here 6 m 6. 1825.

Copy of a letter to John Dunlavy on the occasion of Father David's decease.

Beloved Br. John. U V. 6 m. 29. 1825.

A few weeks ago Elder Matthew presented me a letter which he had received from thee requesting me to answer it as he was about commencing a journey to Warrensville & could not attend to it. I did not think it necessary at that time to answer it, but as matters have turned out it is necessary that the state of things here should be known at Pleasant Hill, and being requested by the ministry to write, what I have to communicate would seem to come with propriety as an answer to that important matter on which you justly expressed so much solicitude, that is, to know whether Father David be dead or alive. Shall I answer that he is dead? Nay. What then shall I tell you? That he is gone? This will not do. Well I must tell you something about him. Will it answer to say that he sleepeth? I can hardly feel clear in using this expression; but I can say at least that he is changed, and it now remains to give you as correct an account of this all-important change as may be consistent with the bounds of a short letter.

As a public minister possessing all the energy necessary to his important office the last acquaintance I had with him was in that weighty labour of reprinting the Testimony. That clearness of intellect and firmness of constitution which he manifested when thou wast here (Aug. 1823) he retained as far as I could discover till the 17th of Nov. following. On that distressing day he gave us the first evidence that his bodily strength was gone, no more to be regained. The impression was then admitted by all concerned that his burdens must needs begin to be lightened. (accordingly he was then released from his last temporal labour, that is carrying up his firewood, which he reluctantly resigned) But determined to make no reserve, to keep nothing back that might be profitable he continued to exercise his spiritual gift till the 5th of last october, on a journey to Watervliet, in company with his fellow labourers, his bodily powers totally failed for a time, and instead of ministering, he had to be ministered to, during the visit and with some difficulty was got home again. Every possible pains being taken to recruit & strengthen him, he again recovered a considerable measure of strength which lasted till about Christmas, when another visit to Watervliet became necessary. As the business was important he determined to go, but again he proved inadequate to the task, and from the period of his return came under the special care of the nurses. His kind and faithful companions in the ministry willing ~~to indulge him~~ as far as possible, to indulge him in that uncommon resolution which scorned to be burdensome, laboured and watched with him till their strength was so far exhausted that help became necessary. Accordingly on the 22d of March I was called to assist as a night watch, and on the 29th took a regular stand as an assistant in general; from that period but little transpired of which I was not a witness. His appetite, at that time was quite gone, so that a small quantity of milk was his principal sustenance. He complained but little of bodily pain or heart-sickness. An increasing debility was the only affection that indicated his approaching dissolution. As to his mental powers the greatest lack was in his memory; altho at times he seemed to have an entire recollection of every occurrence of his past life, & could relate, intelligibly

even the transactions of his youth. But what was lacking in his powers of recollection, was more than made up in the power of perception. Once in particular he observed that it seemed as if he could see every thing in heaven, earth & hell in a moment: But this gift was not habitual that is, he was not all the time under those extensive views, but subject to every vicissitude that circumstances naturally imposed. However, in every circumstance he was still good Father David, affable to his visitants, quick, apt and sensible in his remarks, rightly dividing to each whatever he felt in relation to their state. He requested the pitiful prayers of none, but frequently solicited the company of the sweet singers of Israel, who often surrounded his bed with heavenly songs, with which he was much entertained and refreshed. On such occasions he generally spake as if he was in heaven, saying that he wanted nothing better, — that such gifts were sweeter than any temporal food. He was rarely lacking for good counsel to those who visited him particularly young people, exhorting them to be faithful and hold fast that which they had received. —

Thus he continued, gradually declining and the animal fluids stagnating in defiance of all natural means to the contrary until it began to issue in an unusual disposition to sleep. This was the state of the case about the 20th Inst. which, in a few days, brought on a periodical exacerbation of the disease. In those paroxysms which occurred about every 12 hours his pain was exquisite each seeming to indicate that it must be the last. but unaccountable as it appeared, nature seemed unwilling to yield while there remained one fibre susceptible of pain. But eventually the crisis came. Sabbath evening the 26th, the setting sun seemed to whisper to all the attendants "The end is come! behold it is come!!" Notice began to circulate, the doors were unbolted and free access to all his friends to come and behold the man: and take, at least, a parting look at the beautiful tabernacle about to tumble into ruins. Beautiful I call it not that I would have any mans person in admiration, but it seemed as if the innocent beautiful spirit in those late moments shone with a peculiar brightness from every feature. Numbers attended in solemn silence coming & going, while the watch doubled & trebled stood to their posts. The paroxysms now became violent with but short intervals. At 3 in the morning all were awake & attentive. The lungs sunk under the pressure of the phlegm, the warning rattle had sounded its last, the limbs assumed a fixed position — a stillness reigned over the whole frame. The only remaining symptom of life was a moderate exertion of the breath which lessened as regularly as the vibrations of a pendulum. The last assistance was to turn him with his face toward the door and as he turned his countenance assumed an appearance more than mortal; his eyes wide open with a peculiar smile expressive of the most pleasing sensibility. he continued a few minutes (without groan or struggle) catching his breath shorter & shorter, till a perfect stillness invited Eldress Rachel to close his eyes, which she was enabled to do, with composure, having, through the past hour, exhausted in floods of tears the sorrows of her afflicted soul. Thus the scene closed on Monday June 27. precisely at Sunrise or by the clock 38 min. after 4.

What followed may not be so interesting to detail I need only remark that all parts of the funeral were attended with such order & decorum as never before was exhibited on this ground. Elder Solomon, on whom the principal burden fell, tho almost exhausted with long fatigue, conducted the matter with unexceptionable wisdom & discretion. And Eldress Rachel & Sister Eunice. bore their part of the burden in a manner that justly merited the respect of all. And good Elder Isachar who was early notified and arrived about six in the evening, took his full share in the duties of the scene. His presence & aid have been a peculiar strength & comfort to the ministry & to us all.

The hour appointed for the funeral was two o'clock on Tuesday. The corpse was put into the coffin & placed in the lower part of the meeting house about 9. and between 9 & ten was visited in order by the children, then by the aged & infirm who were unable to attend the funeral. It still retained an unsullied aspect, free from every appearance of frown or wrinkle, it was thought that a stranger would not judge the person to have exceeded forty,

tho' 75 and six days was his age; and what was remarkable, from the time he was laid out till he was put under the ground there was not the least smell of a corpse about him. The meeting began at two, the speaking filled up about an hour and a half, the house was filled with believers of all orders including about 30 brethren & sisters from Watervliet. The procession was solemn & beautiful. 40 bearers in front (4 to relieve every 20 steps) next the bier, attended by four deacons, then the ministry, then the Elders and long train of brethren & sisters in order, computed at about 500. After the interment the dismission was delivered by Elder Ipachar, thanking the assembly and particularly the deacons and bearers for the respect they had shown the ministry and the honor they had done themselves in decently interring the remains of our ~~good~~ beloved Father, whose counsel may we never forget, & whose example may we ever be careful to follow. Amen. After which all returned in order to their respective homes.

This letter being especially intended for the information of the ministry, it is hoped that its coming through this medium will be no umbrage to its acceptance. It would have been most desirable could the matter have gone direct from the ministry but as so many burdens & calls necessarily demand assistance doubtlis the matter will be readily excused, & better information patiently waited for till a more convenient season ~~~~~~~~~~~~ Farewell — From Eleazar.

Extract of a letter to Elder Archibald on the same occasion. June 29. 1825.

Beloved Elder Archibald.

~~of June 21~~ Previous to the reception of this, Elder Ipachars letter of June 21st will have reached thee with the tidings of the then situation of affairs here as it respected our well beloved & highly esteemed parent in the gospel. We have now to inform thee that the matter is come to an issue, Father David hath finished his days on earth, & entered into his rest. He is taken out of our sight as to his personal presence but not out of that relation in which he stood to the body. He hath changed his position but in no respect to our disadvantage, as we believe he is now in a situation to render more important services to the body than at any time since his public gift ceased. It will be unnecessary to say much to thee concerning the character, office, or important service of this eminent first pillar of the gospel in the West. Thy intimate acquaintance with him from the beginning must superside any thing of the kind. The most that we suppose thou will expect will be some account of the manner in which the scene terminated, and the general impression left on the minds of the people.

As the disease consisted mainly in a stagnation of the fluids and had to be combatted by stimulants, the contest of course was long & tedious, which we might say was properly commenced before thy last visit here (Nov. 24 1823). It was a point of prudence in the ministry to manage the case as long as possible independent of special help from any other quarter & thus it continued until worn out with incessant care and watching assistance became essentially necessary "accordingly." The detail in the foregoing letter followed — & closed with the usual salutation.

Copy of the funeral Hymns.

Our good Father David hath finish'd his days and gone to receive his reward
What monument now will be proper to raise His venturous life to record
From statues of marble & gravings on brass the memory of mortals may rot
But while we're united in bearing our cross good Father will not be forgot

He was a cross bearer we all must agree His faithfulness none can dispute
Yea from the beginning this flourishing tree could always be known by his fruit
Among the first plants on American soil his standing he firmly maintain'd
And share'd with first Mother the labor & toil by which gospel freedom was gain'd